West Roxbury March 16th 1846

Dear Mrs Chapman,

I have received, & read with much pleasure, your letter in relation to the Paper published by Dr Hodgson of Maryland.

Whatever may be our opinions as to action here, there is, probably, no difference between us as to the good effect of continual exertion in the land of slavery itself. I have looked with great interest on the noble stand of C. M. Clay in Kentucky, and hope ever thing from such as he. The South must be persuaded, not driven into Abolition; and if one slave State can have such thorough conviction as to free itself, others will follow the good example. It seems to me that some of them must extinguish slavery, not as a matter of right only, but from a regard to their own true interests, and it is cheering to see brave men rising up in their midst & boldly speaking the truth. The strong faith I have in the ultimate good result of the labors of such men would prompt me to give them the little encouragement in my power; but even though there is no prospect of present success, yet something of kindly sympathy is due to them. The South must see, and it will see, the real cause of its decline, and blessed be those who, instead of

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skimming over the surface of political economy and suggesting here & there a superficial remedy, go boldly to the heart of the evil & say - "your Disease is Slavery - retain it & die - or - abolish it & live - There is no other alternative".
The Planter may be transformed to a Manufacturer, but it will matter little whether his worn out lands be covered with Tobacco or Cotton Mills, if the labor, with the hoe or at the loom, is to be performed by Slaves.

You & your Abolition friends are so familiar with your argument against Slavery that it would be absurd in me to repeat what has so often been said; but the ardent zeal & high ability, which have characterized your movement, are mostly felt by those who are abroad with you. You are excluded from the South - or, if your opinions are admitted, they are regarded as being extraneous - something not of them, but forced upon them by what they consider intemperate & intermeddling enthusiasm. The advocates of freedom who stand up among themselves have less decided hostility to encounter at the outset, and a much fairer chance of being heard, being exempted from the prejudice which is apt to close eyes & ears against appeals from this quarter.

Your application to me induces the supposition that I am considered by you as "a friend to the Cause". I am not perhaps, what you would call an Abolitionist. I want the generous impulses which impel you and others, to devote all the energies of mind & body

to the great object of your life. I could calculate the whys & wherefores, and I cannot overcome the Conservatism which looks favorably on Constitution & Laws, on Government & established Usages. I do not approve of all that is done by the organs of your Party. I believe that hard words do not make converts, and that you cannot convince a man by abusing him. I have some consideration for the position, education, & circumstances of the Slave holder, and can comprehend why he pertinaciously clings to what he feels to be his rights, and is indignant at the interference of the North.

But if I am not with you, I am not against you. I feel the force of the eloquence which is so common among you, and that much you say is not, & cannot be, controverted. I respect most deeply the devotedness which has combated the difficulties which arise from poverty & opposition, and the martyr spirit that has borne you through persecution & calumny. The great truth you have felt has carried you successfully onward. The years have become the more, and you can look back at your early struggles & perils without a fear of their repetition.

If I deprecate the tone which is sometimes manifested, it is not because I do not understand it. I can feel why the deep consciousness of the mighty wrong, so constantly before you, arouses an indignation which must be told, and why the cold indifference around you, contrasted with your own burning earnestness, should force

you to expressions which you cannot stop to weigh or measure. Life with you is a feeling. You can know no rest while the work is unfinished. The injustice is always by you - the tale of suffering is continually repeated the crime is forever going on. I do not wonder that the full heart bursts out, when, within a day's travel of us, there are human shambles where flesh & blood are sold & separated - where that horror of horrors, the domestic Slave trade (to which that of the middle passage is humanity) is perpetually carried on. The cruelty of dividing (man & wife parent & child) may be rejoiced by civilization and yet in this Christian land it is an every day familiar thing, and is scarcely noticed unless by the "fanatics" of New England - Should you be censured for complaining of the silence of the pulpit & the apathy of its Ministers? Verily it seems as though the Shepherds had become a flock of sheep.

It doubtless appears strange to you that all, particularly those of the free states, do not think & feel as you do - but the difference between your class & mine is - that you strive to keep the veil before you, and we to shut it out. We like our ease, and we are not fond of always thinking & talking of human misery. We are ready to help when the thing is forced upon us, but we do not often give it a thought when it is not present. We are quite willing to forget the groans of society, as we sit by our comfortable fireside

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and yet we are not always honest enough to confess that we do so. We are "of the earth earthy" but are at times capable of receiving something of the fire which with you is, like the vestal flame, never extinguished. We can burn brightly when once kindled, but it takes time & pains to get us going. You must have patience with us & not ~~utterly~~ condemn us because we are not made of such seasoned materials as yourselves.

Whatever may have been your influence in the Slave States, you certainly have reason to be satisfied with your progress in the free ones. A few short years ago you could not meet together without insult, if not open violence. Your discussions were attended with danger to life & limb, and your names mentioned with contempt & abuse. I need not describe your present position. It is well known & the influence you possess is owing to the unwearied courage, indefatigable perseverance, & purity of motive which have so highly distinguished you.

It has been with you, as it ever has been and ever will be the world through. The great reformers of earth have always slowly advanced through trial & affliction. Persecution has done for them its worst. Power & ridicule have assailed them, but their march has not been arrested. Steel & fire have made, of bleeding & scorched flesh, a path way to help them on. Truth has maintained itself on the scaffold & through flame, until doubt has entered even those who

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bled or roasted the doubter. The little spark, hardly kept alive in secret, has crept on & on through the hearts of men, until at last it has burst forth in a conflagration which has defied human authority —

We live at a period when so much is doing for suffering humanity that one is inclined to wonder that the ages before us have been about. Enquiries are being made - what shall be done to relieve the poor & oppressed - to reclaim the vicious - and to prevent crime rather than to punish it. It is to be hoped that the warlike age has passed, never to return, and that men will find time to think & act for the good of all.

In your appointed course I feel little qualified to act as counsellor. You might smile should I attempt to do so. I should be like one standing by the side of Niagara and kindly encouraging the waters, by recommending them to flow on.

I am, Dear Madam,
Yours very truly
G. T. Rudsell

To confirm the saying that the postscript is oftentimes the best part of a letter. I enclose Twenty Five Dollars, to be appropriated to the support of the Paper of Dr Hodgson —

G. R. Bruce

1846

Mrs M. W. Chapman

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